

Appl. No. 09/960,595
Amdt. dated September 20, 2004
Reply to Office Action of May 20, 2004

Remarks

This preliminary amendment replies to the issues raised in the final Official Action mailed May 20, 2004. It also provides an Interview Summary of a telephone interview conducted with Examiner Chilcott on August 19, 2004. To gain entry of the present amendment, an RCE has been filed. Also, a petition for a one month extension of time and authorization to charge Deposit Account No. 50-1058 the small entity fee for a one month extension of the time to respond have been filed herewith.

The final Official Action rejected claims 26-30, 109, 111, 112, 115 and 116 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) over Brooks U.S. Patent No. 6,067,530 (Brooks) in view of Miller et al. U.S. Patent No. 5,202,825 (Miller). Claims 110, 113 and 114 were also rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) over Brooks in view of Miller. Claims 119 and 120 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103 over Brooks in view of Miller further in view of Green et al. U.S. Patent No. 6,443,359 (Green). Newly submitted claims 117 and 118 were withdrawn from consideration as being directed to a non-elected invention. Claim 26 has been amended to be more clear and distinct by making the amendment discussed with the Examiner in the interview summarized below. New claim 121 has been added to remove the word "wireless" from claim 26. Claims 26-30 and 109-121 are presently pending.

Interview Summary

Having learned that the previous Examiner, Mr. Bartuska, had retired and that the case had been reassigned to Examiner Chilcott, a telephone interview was scheduled for and conducted on August 19, 2004. The interview included Mr. Dobbins, the inventor, the

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undersigned, and Examiner Chilcott. In that Interview, the rejection of claims 26-30 and 109-116 based upon Brooks and Miller was briefly discussed. It was pointed out that these claims address "electronic drop safes" which are used in environments such as convenience stores where they are secured in place near a cashier station or stations so that excess cash can be securely stored.

Brooks, while dealing with electronic drop safes, clearly does not meet the terms of these claims. Both the electronic drop safes of Brooks and the present invention employ bill acceptors which can test currency deposited therein for its validity and reject counterfeits. As addressed below, Miller does not deal with "electronic drop safes as presently disclosed and claimed.

Miller, the secondary reference, is described in the final Official Action as disclosing a plurality of safes 40 connected by a wireless network 21. Miller shows mobile customer service stations 40 with cash drawers 43. It appears the goal of Miller is to allow a mobile customer service station 40 to be located anywhere in a store that a store manager desires to provide checkout services. It is debatable whether these stations 40 can be considered safes, but they are clearly not "electronic drop safes". Miller's mobile stations 40 do not include bill acceptors, and the intended mobility of stations 40 is inconsistent with the typical secure mounting of electronic drop safes.

The final Official Action also referred to the updating of prices using Miller's wireless network as described by Miller. Presumably, this updating of prices is that typical of a fixed POS terminal which looks up prices of goods in a price lookup (PLU) table. It was urged that

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this updating is different from the updating of program memory which changes the operation of the unit as is presently described.

In this context, the Examiner's attention was directed to claims 109, 110 and 113. Claim 109 states "the plurality of electronic safes receive currency updates through the wireless network". This claimed feature allows an electronic drop safe to be updated to accept a new piece of currency such as the new \$20 with enhanced security features. Claim 110 states "the currency data updates include counterfeiting data." To continue the example, if counterfeiters develop a new counterfeit for the new \$20, updated counterfeit data can be provided so those counterfeits can be rejected by the bill acceptor. Claim 113 states "wherein at least one safe . . . receives . . . , firmware updates . . . "

As a conclusion to this discussion, it was proposed that the last element of claim 26 be amended to read: "a bill acceptor interfacing with the controller, at least one of the bill acceptor and the controller [being] having firmware which is updatable through the wireless network." While no agreement was reached as to the allowability of this proposed amendment, the Examiner indicated that subject to further search and analysis of the relied upon art, it would appear to overcome the rejection based upon Brooks and Miller as applied by the final Official Action.

The Art Rejections

The art rejections of the final Official Action are traversed as not supported by the relied upon art. Reconsideration of the claims as presently amended is respectfully requested based upon the grounds discussed during the telephone Interview summarized above.

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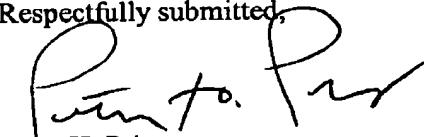
Withdrawal of Claims 117 and 118 From Consideration

Reconsideration of these claims is respectfully requested. These claims are dependent on claims 116 and 115, respectively and are allowable with those claims.

Conclusion

All of the claims as presently amended appearing to define over the relied upon art, prompt allowance of the claims is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,


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